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# Selected Speeches and News Releases

October 26 - November 2, 1989

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## USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26—Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-4.9) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Oct. 27, through midnight Thursday, Nov. 2.

Since the adjusted world price (AWP) is above the 1987, 1988 and 1989 crop base quality loan rates of 52.25, 51.80 and 50.00 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rates for the 1987, 1988 and 1989 crops of upland cotton during this period are equal to the respective loan rates for the specific quality and location.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates. Because the AWP in effect is above the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available for 1989-crop upland cotton sold during this period.

Based on data for the week ending Oct. 26, the AWP for upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

*Chart on next page.*

Adjusted World Price	
Northern Europe Price .....	81.80
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location .....	12.35
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton .....	2.20
Average U.S. location .....	0.39
Sum of Adjustments .....	<u>-14.94</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE .....	66.86 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment	
Northern Europe Price .....	81.80
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price .....	<u>-76.75</u>
	5.05
Adjustment to SLM 1-inch cotton .....	<u>-4.75</u>
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT .....	0.30 cents/lb.
Adjusted World	

The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made on Nov. 2

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

#

## FARMER-OWNED RESERVE OATS LOANS MAY NOT BE REPAYED WITHOUT PENALTY

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that oats in the Farmer-Owned Reserve (FOR) are no longer in release status. Thus, producers may no longer redeem oats pledged as collateral for FOR loans without paying an early redemption penalty.

The decision was made following a review of Oct. 2 average market prices reported by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. The prices were adjusted to reflect the market price received by producers. The national average adjusted price of \$1.39 per bushel for oats on Oct. 2 was 11 cents below the reserve trigger release level.

Producers may continue to repay loans without any penalty if the repayment is made within the final 60 days of the loan maturity date.



Storage payments for oats pledged as collateral for FOR loans will continue to be made by USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Alex King (202) 382-9886 or Robert Feist (202) 447-6789.

#

## **USDA PROPOSES TO ADOPT NEW PSEUDORABIES TEST FOR INTERSTATE SWINE SHIPMENTS**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to amend its rules for shipping swine interstate to take advantage of a new blood test that can distinguish between swine infected with pseudorabies and those inoculated against this disease with a newly developed vaccine.

The new test is marketed commercially as the "HerdChek" antipseudorabies virus gpX "ELISA" test, according to Larry B. Slagle, associate administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. It works in conjunction with "PRV/Marker" vaccine, from which a nonessential glycoprotein (called gpX) is deleted through bio-engineering techniques.

The new test can distinguish between antibodies generated by a field infection and those generated by the gpX-deleted vaccine. Both the vaccine and the test have passed APHIS quality control and licensing procedures.

"Under established rules, swine vaccinated for pseudorabies are subject to tighter controls for interstate shipment than unvaccinated swine," Slagle said. "Vaccination has its advantages. It increases a pig's resistance to infection. If a pig does become infected, vaccination lessens the clinical signs of disease and facilitates recovery. Previously, however, vaccinated swine produced antibodies to the vaccine that could not be distinguished from those produced by infected swine. This disadvantage

Proposed regulation changes would apply to swine from herds not known to be infected or exposed to pseudorabies but vaccinated with the PRV/Marker vaccine. These swine could move freely across state lines to slaughter, to a feedlot, quarantined feedlot or approved livestock market. Consignments moving for other purposes would have to be accompanied by a health certificate that states, among other information, that the swine were vaccinated with the PRV/Marker vaccine and tested negative on a recent HerdChek test.

Pseudorabies, also known as Aujeszky's disease, "mad itch," and infectious bulbar paralysis, is principally a disease of swine. It does not affect humans.

The proposal will be published in the Oct. 31 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before Nov. 30. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket 89-022 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Rm. 866, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-7279

#

## **FUNGUS GIVES GRASSES NATURAL RESISTANCE TO RUSSIAN WHEAT APHIDS**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27—A fungus in perennial grasses that is poisonous to cattle and sheep may one day help control the Russian wheat aphid—the number one enemy of wheat, barley and other cereal crops nationwide, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

Entomologist Stephen L. Clement said the fungus, found in tall fescue and perennial ryegrass, may produce a chemical that deters feeding by or is toxic to the aphids. But the fungus also produces chemicals harmful to cattle and sheep that feed on these grasses, particularly in the Southeast, he said.

"One way of dealing with the problem might be to breed a plant that would not be toxic to livestock but still contain aphid-resistant traits," said Clement of USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Pullman, Wash.

"Someday," he said, "scientists may be able to incorporate safer insect-resistant properties found in the fungus into wheat, barley, and other small grain crops via plant breeding or biotechnology techniques to protect these crops against cereal aphids.

"But for now, we've got a lot more basic research to do. We're using the germplasm collection here as a basis for further study. We'll be looking for this fungus in a wide variety of forage grasses," said



Clement, who heads a Russian wheat aphid team at the ARS's Plant Germplasm Introduction and Testing Research Laboratory in Pullman. The team consists of ARS plant pathologists Walter J. Kaiser and A. Dan Wilson and Washington State University entomologist Keith Pike.

Last August, Clement noticed that some grasses in research plots were heavily infested with aphids and others were not.

"We knew that recent work by other scientists had demonstrated a link between naturally occurring fungi in these grasses and enhanced resistance to various insects," he said. "We wondered if these endophytic fungi played a role in protecting our plants from the Russian wheat aphid. We found that all fungus-infected tall fescue and perennial ryegrass plants were resistant to the aphid in a series of laboratory experiments."

Similar results came from recent tests by entomologist R. D. Kindler and others at the ARS Wheat and Other Cereal Crops Research Laboratory in Stillwater, Okla.

Stillwater entomologist James A. Webster, working with ARS plant breeders, recently found aphid resistance in seven breeding lines of triticale. This little-known grain—the first "man-made crop"—is a cross between wheat and rye. Webster, working with ARS breeders, is incorporating all seven lines into a wheat breeding program. He said it could take several years for aphid-resistant wheat lines to reach breeders of commercial varieties, depending on whether triticale's resistance comes from its rye or wheat ancestors.

Clement said the Russian wheat aphid probably originated in central Asia. Since its first U.S. sighting—Texas in 1986—it has invaded grain crops and forage grasses in 16 states. In 1988, Northwest grain producers spent \$100 million trying to control it with insecticides, he said. It is difficult to control with present chemicals and has no effective natural enemies in the U.S.

Other agency efforts against the aphid include:

- Lab and field tests with biological controls;
- Developing aphid-resistant crop varieties;
- Determining mechanisms of the aphid's damage to plants; and
- Creating computer simulations so potential control strategies can be assessed.

Marcia Wood (415) 559-6070

#

USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR SEPTEMBER

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for September 1989:

Cost of food at home for a week in September 1989

	-----Food plans----- (In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2 (20-50 years)	45.00	56.60	70.00	86.90
Family of 2 (51 years and over)	42.50	54.20	67.10	80.40
Family of 4 with preschool children	65.50	81.60	99.60	122.40
Family of 4 with elemen- tary schoolchildren	75.00	95.70	119.80	144.40
Individuals in four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	11.80	14.40	16.70	20.20
3-5 years	12.80	15.70	19.30	23.20
6-8 years	15.60	20.70	25.90	30.30
9-11 years	18.50	23.50	30.30	35.10
Females:				
12-19 years	19.30	23.10	28.10	34.00
20-50 years	19.40	24.10	29.30	37.50
51 and over	19.10	23.30	28.90	34.60
Males:				
12-14 years	19.30	26.70	33.40	39.10
15-19 years	20.10	27.60	34.30	39.80
20-50 years	21.50	27.40	34.30	41.50
51 and over	19.50	26.00	32.10	38.50

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Dr. James T. Heimbach, acting administrator of HNIS, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods, and other nonfood items bought at the store.

“USDA costs are only guides to spending,” Heimbach said. “Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home.

“Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable,” he said. “The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan.”

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from the amount shown for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart are for individuals in fourperson families. If your family has more or less than four, total the “individual” figures and make these adjustments, because larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones:

—For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

—For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

—For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

—For a fiveor six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

—For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, HNIS, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Johna Pierce (301) 436-8617

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## **NEW PORTION OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY ADDED TO ORIENTAL FRUIT FLY QUARANTINE**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has expanded the area of Los Angeles County quarantined in September to prevent the spread of Oriental fruit flies.

“A 70-square-mile area is being added to the quarantine in response to additional flies found in the county,” said Larry B. Slagle, associate administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “Since Oct. 4, inspectors have found six Oriental fruit flies in the Elysian Park area, and we need to prevent further spread of the pest.”

The amended regulations restrict interstate movement of produce from the quarantined areas. Regulated articles must be accompanied by a certificate or a limited permit issued by an inspector, or meet other conditions established by the quarantine regulations.

“Oriental fruit flies can do serious damage to over 200 citrus fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries,” said Slagle. “The flies’ short life cycle, about 21 to 30 days, permits rapid development of infestations that can cause serious damage to these crops.”

A 79-square-mile area of Los Angeles County and Orange County had been quarantined Sept. 19 after six Oriental fruit flies were discovered there.

The amended regulations, which became effective on Oct. 20, were published in the Oct. 26 Federal Register. Comments on the action will be accepted if they are received on or before Nov. 13. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket No. 89-187 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 866, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Questa Glenn (301) 436-7799

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## FORMER USDA EMPLOYEE AND TWO CASE INDIVIDUALS SENTENCED IN BRIBERY

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27—A former county Supervisor with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration and a northern California home builder and his employee were sentenced late Wednesday in U.S. District Court, Sacramento, for bribery and conspiracy to defraud the government, a USDA official said.

Deputy Inspector General Leon Snead said that Sandra L. Horn, 38, who resigned her position as FmHA's Shasta County Supervisor during the investigation, was sentenced to 5 years in prison and 5 years' probation. Jon F. Meamber, 46, owner of Nor Cal Construction Co., Redding, Calif., was sentenced to 8 years in prison and ordered to pay \$106,000 in restitution. Marsha A. Carr, 44, a Nor Cal employee, was sentenced to 1 year in prison and 5 years' probation.

The sentences resulted from guilty pleas entered by the three persons to charges of bribery and conspiracy to obstruct and impede the lawful operations of FmHA in its management and supervision of housing construction and loan programs.

The 10-month investigation by USDA's Office of Inspector General disclosed that Meamber received a fraudulent FmHA loan of \$75,000 in the name of a third party, Snead said. He also received preferential treatment in the rural housing program from Horn. Horn accepted over \$100,000 in cash and home improvements from Meamber during the period from January 1984 to October 1987. In exchange Horn approved the fraudulent loan and approved the development of housing subdivisions under FmHA's rural housing program for Meamber. Horn also expedited the processing of loan applications for the purchase of houses built by Meamber. Carr acted as the intermediary for the transfer of the bribes from Meamber to Horn.

The U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of California, Sacramento, prosecuted the case.

Henry Hairston (202) 447-6701

#

## **USDA LIFTS QUARANTINE ON AREA PREVIOUSLY INFESTED WITH ORIENTAL FRUIT FLY**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—On Oct. 16, the U.S. Department of Agriculture removed quarantine restrictions imposed Aug. 15 on a 65-square-mile area of Los Angeles County near West Covina, Calif., which had been infested with Oriental fruit fly.

According to Larry B. Slagle, associate administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the last finding of an Oriental fruit fly in that area was reported on July 22. Since then, trapping surveys by federal, state and county officials in California have determined that the fly has been completely eradicated from this area. Another quarantine for Oriental fruit fly near Cerritos, also in Los Angeles County, remains in effect.

This regulatory action is an interim rule. Comments will be considered if received on or before Dec. 19. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket No. 89-186 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 866, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-7768

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 10.55 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 9.67 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 9.55 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 5.27 cents per pound.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$6.52 per hundredweight;

- medium grain, \$6.03 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.81 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3 p.m. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Nov. 7, at 3 p.m. EST, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-7923

#

## **PRIVATE EXPORTERS REPORT SALES ACTIVITY FOR SAUDI ARABIA**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—Private exporters today reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture export sales of 100,000 metric tons of barley for delivery to Saudi Arabia during the 1989-90 marketing year.

The marketing year for barley began June 1.

USDA issues both daily and weekly export sales reports to the public. Exporters are required to report to USDA export sales of 100,000 metric tons or more of one commodity, made in one day, to one destination by 3:00 PM eastern time on the next business day following the sale. Export sales of less than these quantities must be reported to USDA on a weekly basis.

Thomas B. McDonald (202) 447-3273

#

## **CCC LOAN INTEREST RATE FOR NOVEMBER 8-1/8 PERCENT**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1—Commodity loans disbursed in November by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry an 8-1/8 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 8-1/8 percent rate is down from the 8 1/4 percent rate for October and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in November.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-6787

#



## USDA, MANUFACTURER WORK ON SAFE PESTICIDE WASTE DISPOSAL

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1—A leading pesticide manufacturer has teamed up with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to further develop a system to safely decontaminate pesticide wastewater in rural and suburban communities.

The portable treatment uses ozone gas coupled with soil microorganisms to break down the unused pesticides before disposal.

Ciba-Geigy Corp. of Greensboro, N.C., has entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA scientists who first began developing the treatment. The scientists have applied for a patent on the treatment and equipment.

The goal is to turn unused pesticides into innocuous carbon dioxide rather than convert them to other toxic compounds and burn them, said chemist Cathleen J. Somich of USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md.

"We don't want to take the risk of substituting air pollution for water pollution," she said.

Steve Dumford, director of new technology and basic research for Ciba-Geigy, said his company is getting ready to start testing a second prototype of the device. "We want to see if it can handle larger volumes of pesticides and higher concentrations," he said.

Although the technology is far from the commercial stage, Dumford envisions the device being transported from farm to farm to treat pesticides and wastewater leftover from cleaning pesticide application equipment. It might be operated by a local government agency, farmer coop or pesticide distributor, he said.

Philip C. Kearney, originator of the treatment at Beltsville, said that this type of device might be used by lawn care companies as well. "It also may one day be scaled-up to handle heavy industrial waste. This would include manufacturing waste from both farm and home use. The idea is to prevent the chemicals from ever entering the nation's waterways," he said.

A year ago, Somich and colleagues tested the original prototype, with seed money from Ciba-Geigy, on a University of Maryland farm at the Beltsville center. They processed five 30-gallon batches of a typical pesticide "soup"—detergent and water used to clean four corn herbicides from spray tanks.



In three days, the two-step treatment destroyed 96 percent of the metolachlor, 85 percent of the cyanazine, 70 percent of the atrazine, and 46 percent of the paraquat, Somich said.

Somich describes the ideal treatment this way: “First, we pump ozone gas through the wastewater in one chamber. As the bubbles contact the pesticides, they gradually break them down into harmless biodegradable byproducts,” Somich said. “Then we transfer the water to another chamber to filter it through soil where native microorganisms break down the byproducts, leaving little besides water, ammonia and carbon dioxide.”

Some pesticides are resistant to microbial digestion, but the ozone treatment oxidizes and makes them more biodegradable, she said. “We’re working to further improve the soil microbe part of the treatment.”

One improvement the team is seeking is a “super bug” that will metabolize the pesticide byproducts more efficiently. The scientists had earlier success with a soil microbe that could eat a single pesticide in wastewater, but the microbe was inhibited in the soup of four pesticides, Somich said.

She also plans to replace soil with a less complex media for the microbes, to get more consistent results.

Somich said some researchers have equipment that collects and evaporates wastewater to make a pesticide cake that can later be incinerated. Many farmers don’t have such sophisticated equipment, she said. “They try their best but, eventually, some of their pesticide wastewater may end up in surface or groundwater,” she said.

Don Comis (301) 344-2773

#

## **USDA ESTABLISHES WATER QUALITY COORDINATION GROUP**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1—Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jack C. Parnell today announced the establishment of a new working group to improve internal coordination of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s water quality programs.

Parnell said the Working Group on Water Quality, operating as a unit of the secretary of agriculture’s Policy and Coordination Council, has been charged with three specific tasks: coordinating all USDA policies

and programs relating to water quality activities; developing and recommending strategies for carrying out these activities; and providing advice and guidance on water quality issues to the policy council, which is comprised of all USDA sub-cabinet officials.

“Water quality is a major priority within USDA, budgeted at \$180 million this fiscal year, with emphasis on research, education and technical assistance programs,” Parnell said. “Several USDA agencies are involved in various aspects of water quality, so the working group’s direction will be important in coordinating programs to avoid duplication of efforts and assure the most critical needs are correctly addressed.”

The working group will be chaired by Harry Mussman, deputy assistant secretary for science and education. The group also will include representatives of the assistant secretaries for marketing and inspection, natural resources and environment, economics, and each of the USDA agencies involved in water-quality programs.

Mike Hoback (202) 447-5035

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**THIS WEEK’S HONEY-LOAN REPAYMENT LEVELS  
UNCHANGED**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2—Producers may repay their 1988 and 1989 honey price-support loans at the following levels, according to Keith D. Bjerke, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation:

**Weekly Honey-loan Repayment Levels, color and class, cents per  
pound**

	1989-crop	1988-crop
Table		
White .....	40.0	40.0
Extra-light Amber .....	37.0	37.0
Light Amber .....	36.0	36.0
Amber .....	35.0	34.0
Nontable.....	33.0	33.0

The levels are unchanged from those announced April 20, 1989.

Producers who redeem their honey pledged as loan collateral by repaying their 1988 or 1989 honey-price support loans at these levels may not repledge the same honey as collateral for another loan.

Contacts: Jane K. Phillips (202) 447-7601 8:00 am-4:30 pm EST

John C. Ryan (202) 447-8207 4:30 pm-5:30 pm EST

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## **USDA REQUESTS COMMENTS ON 1990 RICE PROGRAM PROVISIONS**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today requested comments on additional provisions of the 1990 rice program.

Decisions on the 1990 program provisions will be made based on public recommendations, current data on U.S. crop conditions, and the outlook for supply and demand.

Comments are sought on:

- Whether an acreage reduction program should be implemented and, if so, the percentage of reduction under the program;
- The loan and purchase level;
- Loan rate adjustments;
- The established target price;
- Whether the secretary of agriculture should require producers to purchase marketing certificates as a condition of permitting loan repayments at a reduced level;
- Whether the secretary should make loan deficiency payments available to producers;
- Whether an optional land diversion program should be established and, if so, the percentage of diversion under the program;
- The national program acreage;
- Whether a voluntary reduction percentage should be proclaimed and, if so, the level of the percentage;
- Whether a portion of the deficiency or diversion payments should be made in the form of commodity certificates or other in-kind compensation;
- the provisions of a marketing certificate program;
- and whether an inventory reduction program should be implemented.



Comments should be sent to Bruce R. Weber, director, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA-ASCS, Room 3741-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013. Comments should be received no later than Dec. 5.

On Aug. 7, USDA announced program provisions common to the 1990 rice, wheat, feed grains and upland cotton programs.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789.

#

## MUTANT PEA POSSIBLE LINK TO BETTER DIET

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2—The suicidal tendencies of an experimental pea plant could lead to better nutrition for American consumers, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist says.

All plants, including peas, normally draw only enough iron from the soil to satisfy their needs, then shut down the processes by which they take up the iron.

But one experimental pea plant, a mutant dubbed E107, doesn't know when to stop taking up iron. The plant eventually accumulates enough to kill itself, according to Ross M. Welch, a plant physiologist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"We'd love to get more iron into the edible parts of plants," said Welch, who works at ARS' Plant, Soil and Nutrition Laboratory at Ithaca, N.Y. "For some population groups in this country, the diet is short on iron. This plant could help us show ways we might increase the iron content of our crop plants."

Welch said E107 differs from the commercial pea variety Sparkle by only one gene, and researchers know which gene this is.

"Within the next two years, we should finish characterizing the physiology of the mutant," he said. "Then we want to compare the normal plant with the mutant and see what that one gene does in the normal plant. If that or another gene is found to be responsible for the increased iron absorption, biotechnology might be used to transfer the appropriate gene into plants."

Welch said studies of the plant might also provide insights into idiopathic hemochromatosis, a genetic disorder in humans. Victims of this disorder accumulate too much iron, even when consuming a normal diet. If left untreated, this leads to liver damage and eventually death.

Sandy Miller Hays (301) 344-4089

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# Media Advisory:

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY:**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—Under Secretary of Agriculture Roland R. Vautour will hold a press conference with U.S. Representatives Clyde C. Holloway (R- La., 8th District) and Richard Baker (R-La., 6th District) from 8:30 to 9 a.m., Monday, Nov. 6, in Plaquemine, La.

The press conference will precede a town meeting sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to discuss policies affecting economic development in the region with local leaders. Both events will take place at the Iberville Parish Courthouse Police Jury Room, 600 Merian Street, in Plaquemine.

As under secretary of agriculture for small community and rural development, Vautour oversees federal programs of USDA's Farmers Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation and Rural Electrification Administration that assist economic development in the nation's small and rural communities. The Plaquemine town meeting meeting is the latest in a series of such meetings sponsored by USDA in rural regions around the country.

Rob Richards, (202) 447-5371.

